

VZCZCXRO2398
OO RUEHROV
DE RUEHJM #0166/01 0221150
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 221150Z JAN 09
FM AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3906
RHEHAAA/WHITE HOUSE WASHDC
RHEHNSC/WHITE HOUSE NSC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEKJCS/DIA WASHDC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RUEADWD/DA WASHINGTON DC//DAS-ZD/DACS-ZK//
RUEAHQA/CSAF WASHINGTON DC//POLAD//
RHMFIUU/CMC WASHINGTON DC
RUENAAA/CNO WASHINGTON DC//POLAD//
INFO RUEHXX/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE
RUEHTU/AMEMBASSY TUNIS 7501
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 4486
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 4334
RUEHNC/AMEMBASSY NICOSIA 5828
RUEHRO/AMEMBASSY ROME 4250
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2822

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 JERUSALEM 000166

SIPDIS

STATE PASS BBG
STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD
NSC FOR SHAPIRO/PASCUAL
WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM
CMC WASHINGTON DC FOR POLAD

JERUSALEM ALSO FOR ICD
LONDON FOR HKANONA AND POL - TSOU
PARIS ALSO FOR POL
ROME FOR MFO

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [KMDR](#) [KPAL](#) [KWBG](#) [KPAO](#) [IS](#)

SUBJECT: JERUSALEM MEDIA REACTION (01/22): HOPES FOR OBAMA;
PESSIMISM ABOUT ARAB RECONCILIATION

Main Stories:

All papers run front page photos of the infrastructure devastation in Gaza, and report that two additional bodies of people killed in the war were found under rubble, while three others died of injuries sustained during the Israeli bombing campaign. Al Quds adds that Israeli navy vessels fired on parts of the Gaza coastline on January 21.

Al Hayat Al Jadeeda reports that several smuggling tunnels connecting Gaza with Egypt have already reopened. But, the paper notes, Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak has threatened to destroy them. Al Hayat Al Jadeeda also carries a Reuters report that Israel is blocking the Palestinian Authority from transferring cash into Gaza, preventing it from distributing salaries and recovery assistance to Gazans.

On the diplomatic front, Al Quds reports on a five-point German plan "to solve the Gaza and Palestine crises" and French plans to call for an international peace conference in Paris. The paper quotes Israeli sources characterizing the European initiatives as coming at a time when President Obama is not likely to have a firm position on the Palestinian issue. The Israeli sources speculate that President Obama will want to avoid the appearance of interfering in the upcoming Israeli elections on February 10th. The German plan, according to Al Quds, calls for providing assistance to Gaza, preventing smuggling, opening crossings and re-launching peace negotiations with Israel. Al Quds further reports that EU foreign ministers urged Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni in Brussels on January 21 to open the Gaza crossings. Al Ayyam and Al Hayat Al Jadeeda front page statements by the Quartet Envoy Tony Blair saying the Quartet would be willing to talk to Hamas if it accepts the two-state solution.

Al Quds and Al Ayyam front page statements in Damascus by Hamas politburo chief Khaled Mesh'al urging the West Bank "to revolt in order to become victorious as Gaza did." Mesh'al is also quoted demanding that Hamas be allowed to handle Gaza reconstruction funds and describing what happened in Gaza as "the first war fought and won by the Palestinians on their land". Al Quds also reports that Hamas spokesperson Sami Abu Zuhri announced that Hamas accepts the Saudi initiative for internal Palestinian reconciliation. The paper notes, though, that Egypt has delayed the visit by representatives of the Palestinian factions to Cairo in order to allow more time for consultations.

All three papers cite an Israeli TV Channel 2 report that a number of Israeli ministers have lifted their opposition to a Hamas list of prisoners to be released in exchange for captured Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit. The reports note that Egyptian Foreign Minister Abu Al Ghayt confirmed that neither Israel nor Egypt know anything about Shalit's fate.

All papers front page President Barack Obama's call to Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas on January 21 - "the first to a foreign president" - to confirm his commitment to working together to achieve peace in the region. The papers note that President Obama telephoned other regional leaders, including Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and Jordanian King Abdullah II. Al Ayyam runs a photo of President Obama sitting to sign directives "on his first day" as President.

All papers report that President Obama officially offered George

JERUSALEM 00000166 002 OF 002

Mitchell the post of Middle East envoy and that the U.S. Congress confirmed Hillary Clinton as Secretary of State.

The three papers run extensive inside coverage of President Obama's achievements, describing him as one of three seminal figures in African-American history, along with Abraham Lincoln and Martin Luther King.

BLOCK QUOTES:

1) Randa Taqi Aldin opines in Al Quds under the title "Obama can find a solution to the Palestinian issue": "Though Obama's administration cannot change its structural alliance with Israel, one hopes that intelligence and political good sense will prevail in order to reach a permanent solution to the Palestinian cause. This cause fuels violence and hatred against the West [among] Arab nations that look upon Israel as the US regional proxy, which is allowed to do anything without being held accountable [for its actions]."

2) Talal Okal writes in Al Ayyam under the title "War and its aftermath": "Instead of the Arabs reconciling at the Kuwait summit, they differed once again on several issues...[including] the ownership of Gaza reconstruction, opening of the crossings and lifting of the siege...This means that we might return to the situation before the war, with a deep Palestinian division that reflects a deeper Arab division."

WALLES